

# The State of Our Workforce

Western NC

2018



**ASHEVILLE**  
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE





# INTRODUCTION

## State of Our Workforce: WNC Analysis

The quality of our current and future workforce is increasingly seen as the most important factor in our region’s economic growth and vitality. With more than 450,000 people in Asheville MSA and around ten million in the State of North Carolina, the need to build a strong workforce and talent pipeline is critical. The success of WNC and state depends on a workforce that is well educated, informed, and equipped with proper skills.

### MOTIVATION

In North Carolina, businesses are increasingly struggling to deal with a skills gap, between the types of skills needed for work and the types of potential workers available in the marketplace. As of September 2018, counties in the Asheville MSA continue to have the lowest unemployment rates of all counties in the state. As our residential population continues to grow in the region, so does the need for meaningful work.

67%

of companies surveyed expect to grow in the next three years

### BACKGROUND

The Economic Development Coalition for Asheville Buncombe County, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, and over 20 regional partner organizations collaborated with the North Carolina Chamber and RTI to survey businesses across a 10-county region in Western North Carolina. The analysis asks how businesses expect to grow, the types of jobs, skills, training, and education they need in their future workforce, and where they are looking to find their future workforce. The purpose of the survey is to capture the critical skill needs of businesses over the next three years. Our goal is to identify solutions to close the skills gap and improve the workforce pipeline—which will ensure that companies in our area have the talent they need to succeed. With the data provided from this analysis, we can better align education systems, economic development initiatives, and address business needs so our region can continue to grow and thrive.

### Survey Objectives

- ✓ Understand both short & long-term hiring needs
- ✓ Inform training & education providers of the current workforce needs
- ✓ Provide current workforce information for policy makers in workforce, education, & economic development
- ✓ Develop an effective cradle-to-career talent pipeline strategy
- ✓ Create an efficient structure for ongoing industry feedback

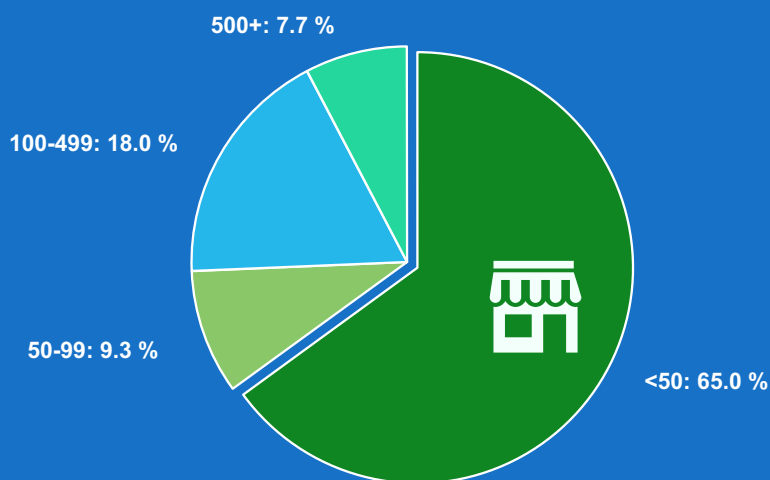


# OVERARCHING FINDINGS

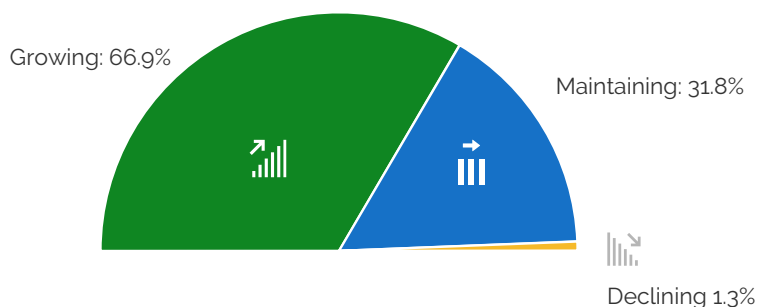
Overall, the survey findings indicate many industries are projecting growth in the next three years. Therefore, the workforce pipeline will need to expand and be equipped with the right skills. The survey revealed multiple key conclusions that will help align the region's workforce ecosystem.

## Small businesses dominate responses

Responses by number of employees:



## Companies expect to grow workforce over next 3 years



12,700 to 26,700 new jobs for the region



Growth expected across all business sizes

## Industry Findings



Manufacturing.....11



Restaurant, Lodging, & Hospitality Services .....12



Public Sector & Education .....13



Professional and Technical Services....14



Retail.....15



Construction & Skilled Trades .....16



Healthcare & Social Assistance.....17



Energy, Utilities, & Cleantech .....18



IT, Software, & Analytics.....19



Logistics, Transportation, & Warehousing.....20

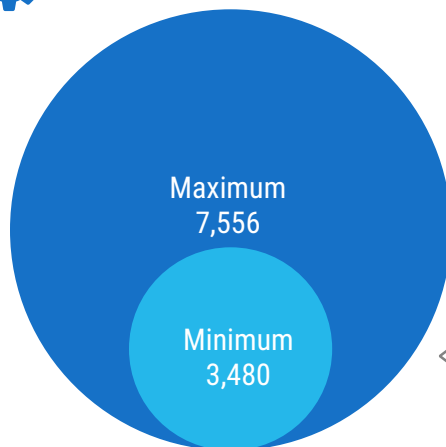
## Industries anticipating largest hiring needs:



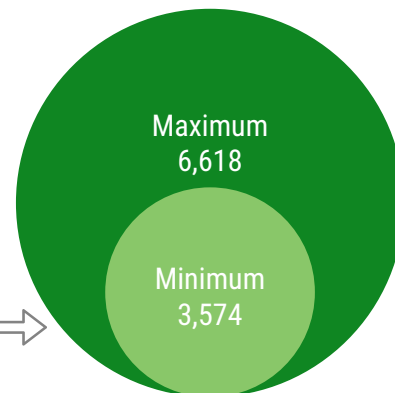
Manufacturing



Restaurant,  
Lodging & Hospitality



← Projected Growth →



Three quarters of healthcare companies expect to grow, creating up to 3,200 jobs

Companies most frequently looking for workers with:



Community  
College Degree

- OR -



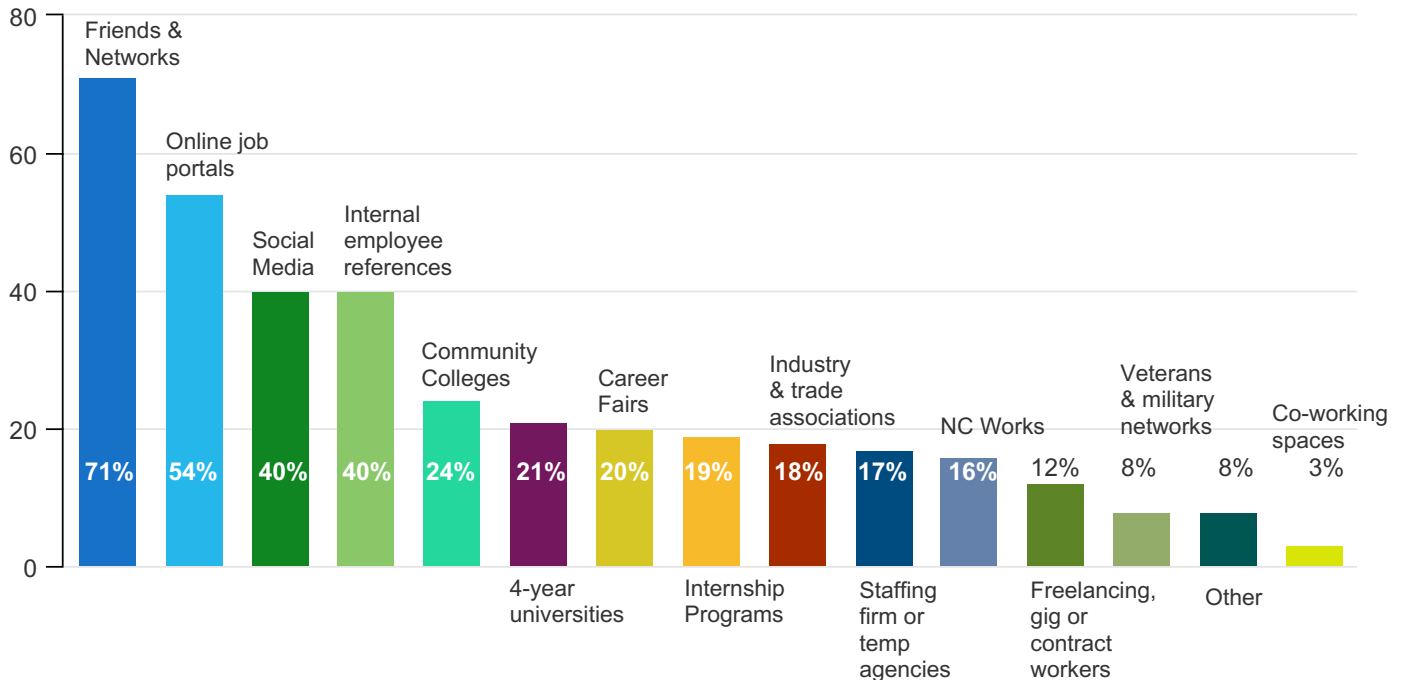
Professional  
Certification

## Top soft skills sought by employers:



1. Responsibility and self discipline
2. Taking initiative
3. Professionalism
4. Critical thinking

# Where do companies most frequently source talent?



## Most common way to hire is through networks



Over 70% of employers rely on professional networks and family and friends to recruit talent

Most common way small businesses (<50 employees) source talent



Medium sized companies (50-500 employees) and large companies (500+ employees) rely on online job portals more

## Talent pipeline rated slightly above average

Most companies rated talent pipeline a 2 or 3 with average of 2.76 out of 5.

Industries with **HIGHEST** talent pipeline ratings



Public Sector



Education



Nonprofit



Energy



Healthcare

Industries with **LOWEST** talent pipeline ratings



Logistics



Construction



Restaurants

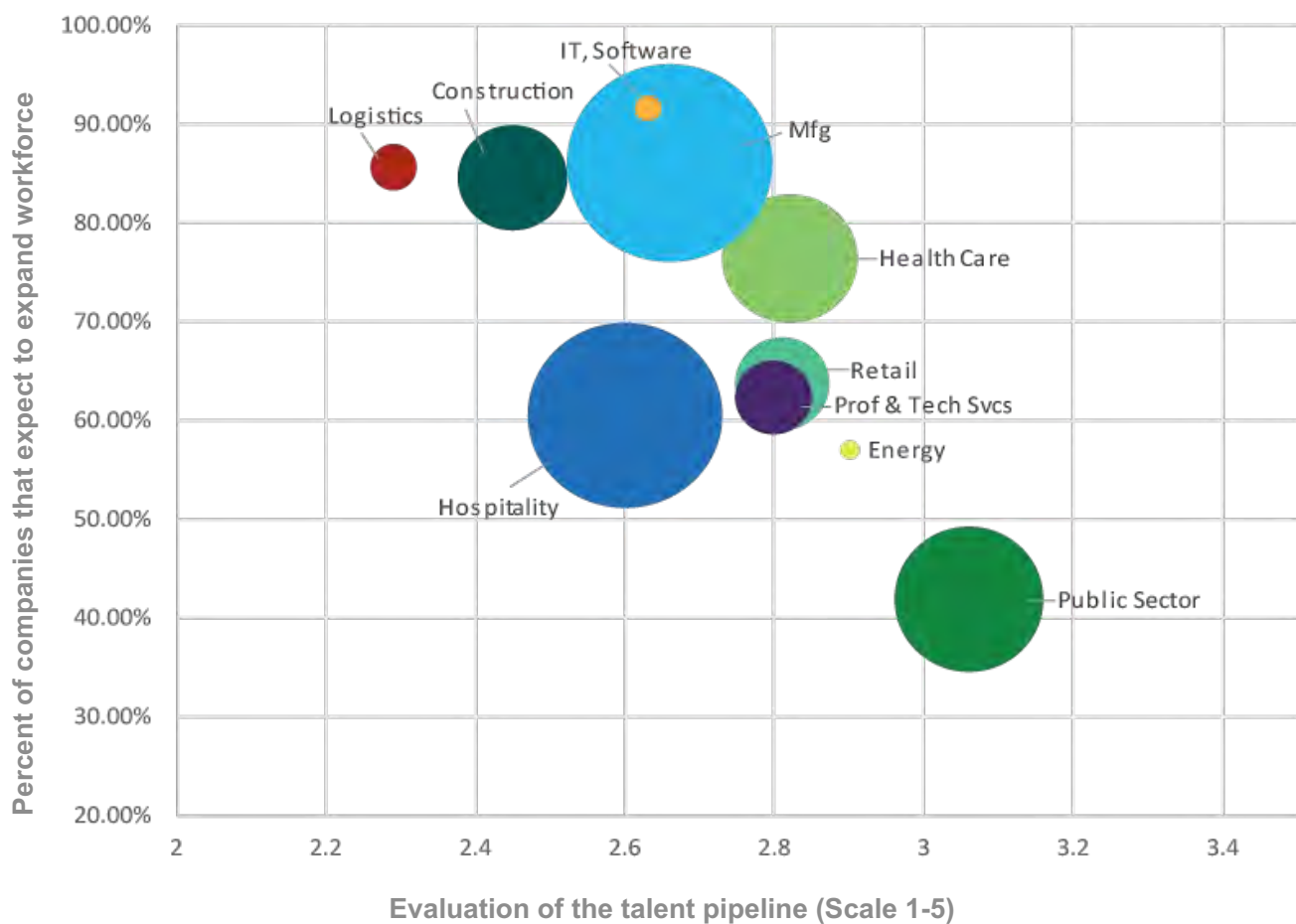
## Potential gap between expectations of hiring and quality of talent pipeline.

Some industries with highest hiring expectations have below average evaluations of talent pipeline.



Restaurant, Lodging & Hospitality industry is hiring (adding up to 7,500 jobs) but rating local pipeline below average (2.6 out of 5)

# Evaluation of Talent Pipeline by Industry



Potential gap between what industries are seeking and how they plan to develop workforce.



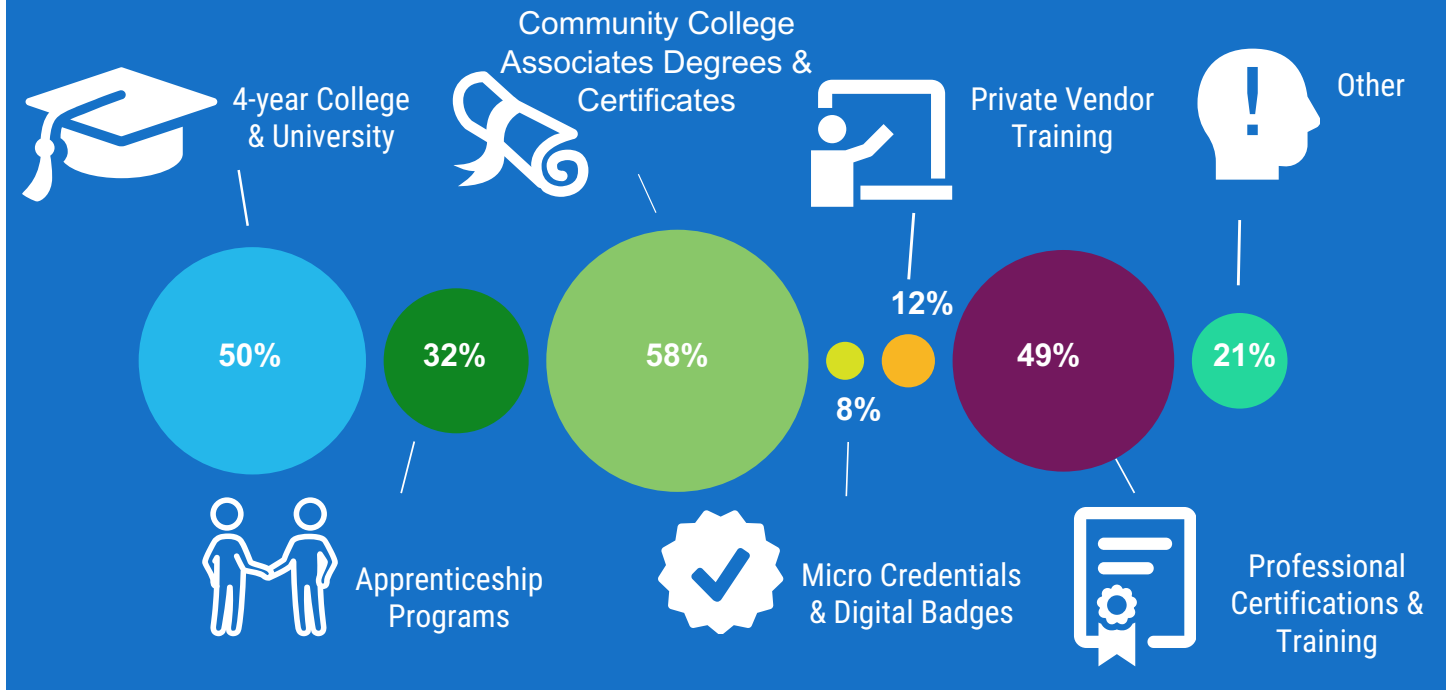
32.5% of companies expressed interests in apprenticeships as credential for hiring.

BUT only 28.6% planned to use apprenticeships as a tool to strengthen workforce.

Gap widest among industries expecting high levels of hiring (manufacturing, construction).



## Credentials and education desired by companies:



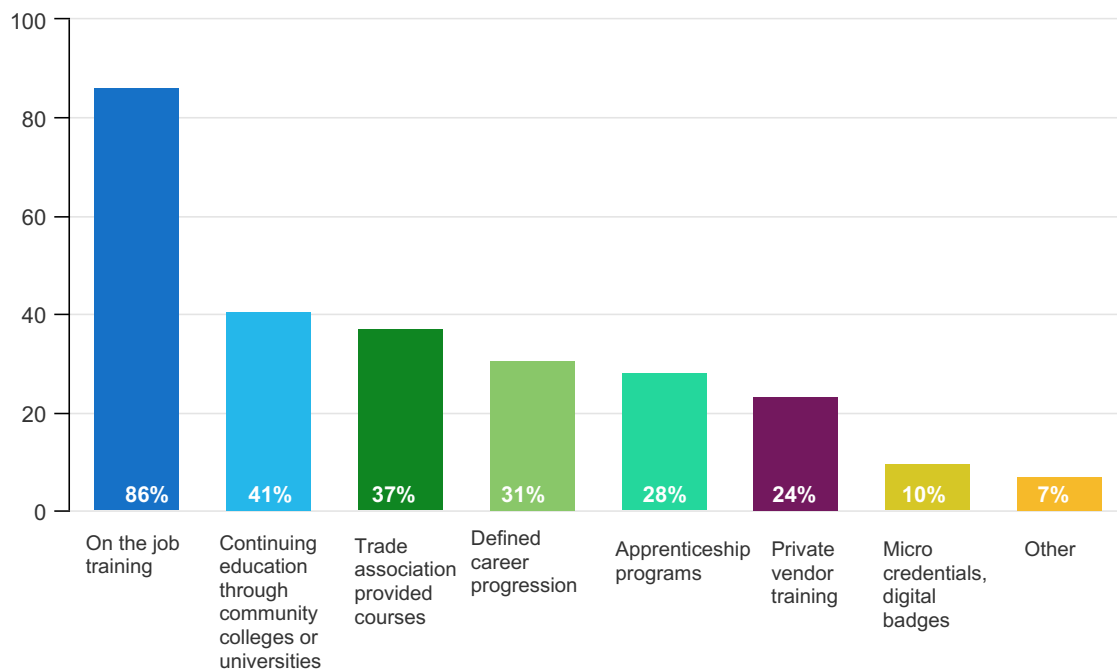
## Expected openings range from entry level to experienced.

Over half of companies expect to have entry level positions that require Associates Degree or less while a third expect to hire for mid-level positions that require Bachelors and/or work experience.

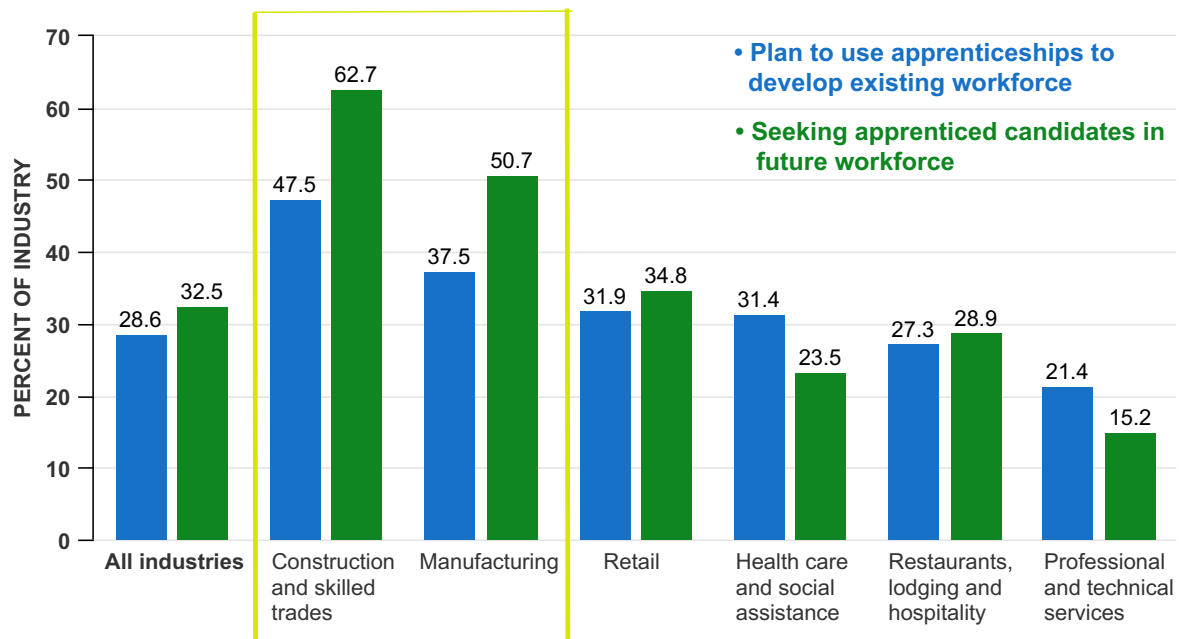
Challenge anticipated for hiring entry level positions requiring associates degree or professional certificate. Therefore, supporting community colleges remains key.



On the job training tops list of tools employers will use to develop existing workforce.

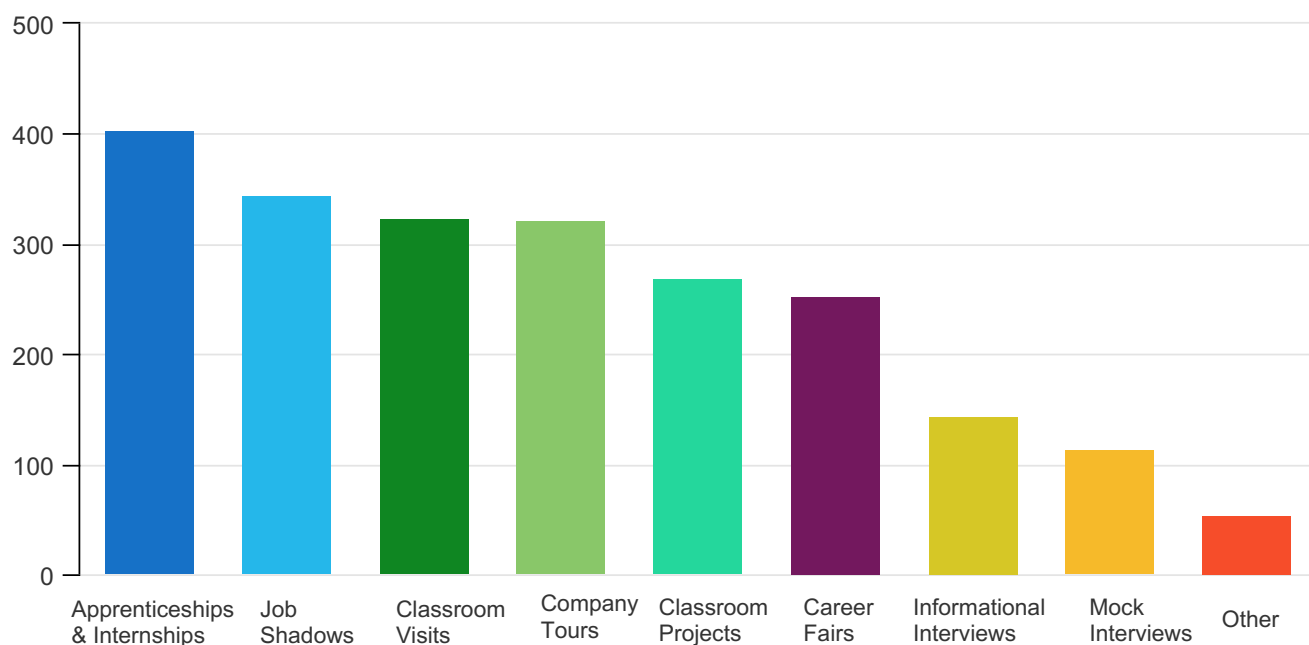


Apprenticeships can bridge the gap between credentials employers are looking for and tools they are using to strengthen current workforce.



\* Opportunity to impact these industries through apprenticeships

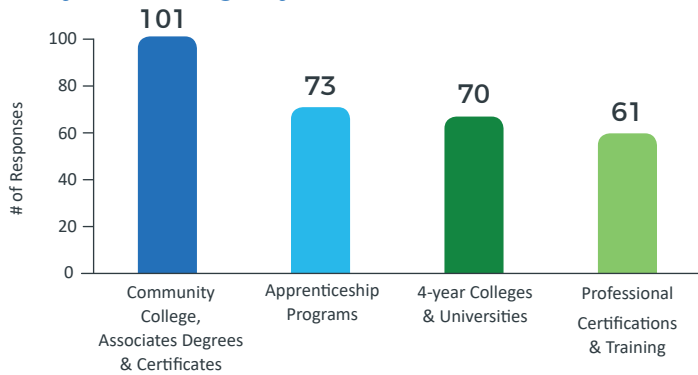
## What is the best way to expose students at the K-12 level to your industry?



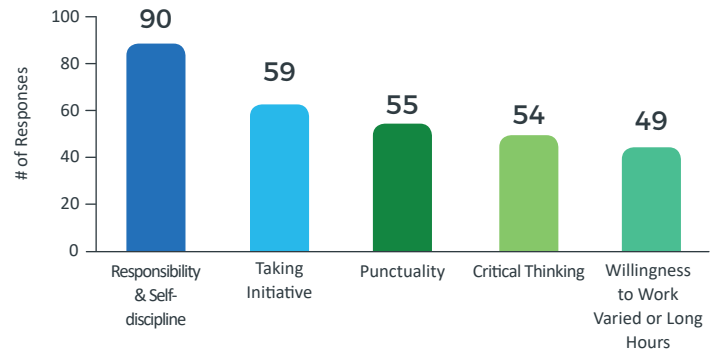
# MANUFACTURING

(INCLUDES FOOD & BEVERAGE PRODUCTION)

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



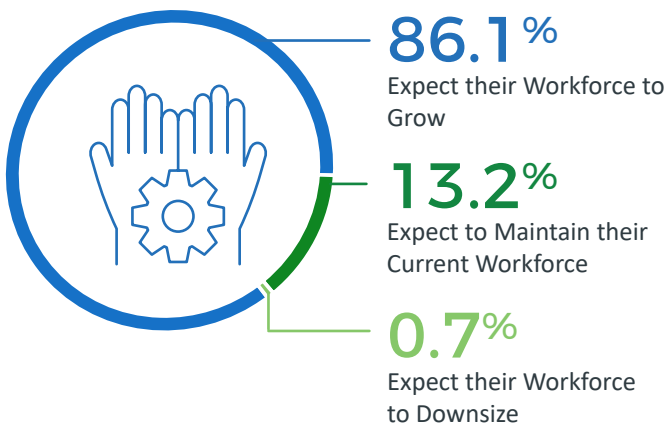
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 101** Front-line Production Workers
- 66** Machine Operators (Not Computerized)
- 59** Maintenance & Repair Personnel
- 57** Engineers
- 52** Supervisors & Managers

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 97** Effective Use of Resources, Limiting Waste, Continuous Improvement
- 88** Effective Communication to Share the Status of Work & Problems
- 66** Participates & Contributes to a Safe Work Environment
- 55** Selection & Effective Use of Tools, Machinery, Equipment & Other Resources in Production
- 44** Effective Implementation of Operational Manuals & Instructions

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?



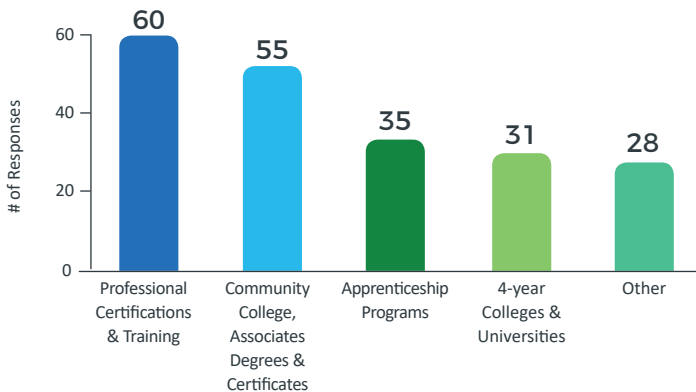
## Key Takeaway

Of all 10 industries, Manufacturing is expected to grow the most in the next 3 years, adding as many as 7,500 new jobs. Over 50% of respondents are seeking candidates with apprenticeship experience for future workforce.

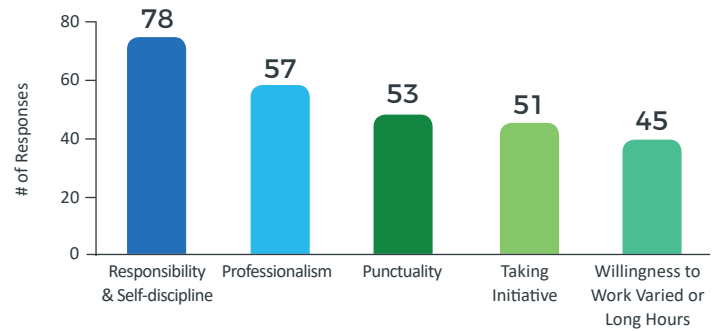
*"As many current manufacturing workers reach retirement age, we need a new generation of workers equipped with good problem-solving skills to enter the market." ~President, Small Manufacturing Company*

# RESTAURANT, LODGING, & HOSPITALITY SERVICES

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



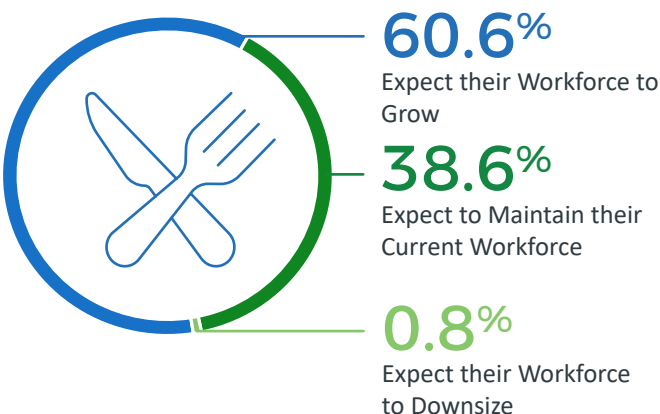
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

64	Food Preparation Staff
61	Housekeepers
60	Guest Services Staff
52	Wait/Banquet Staff
42	Culinary specialist/Chef

What skills are the most important for hiring?

113	Commitment to Customer Service
72	Application of Appropriate Food, Health & Safety Practices
59	Effective Communication & Negotiation Techniques
26	Other
26	Effective Allocation of Resources

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?



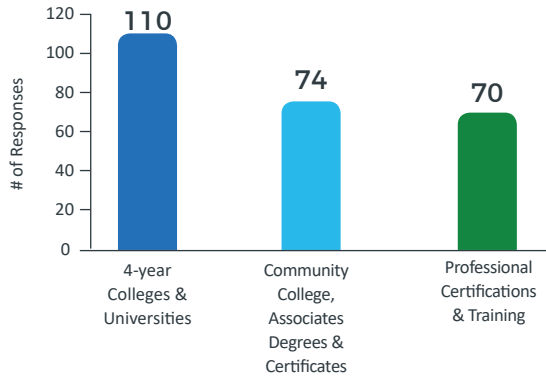
## Key Takeaway

This industry expects to add as many as 6,500 jobs in the next 3 years, second to manufacturing for number of jobs by industry. However, they rated the quality of local pipeline below average, at 2.6 of 5.

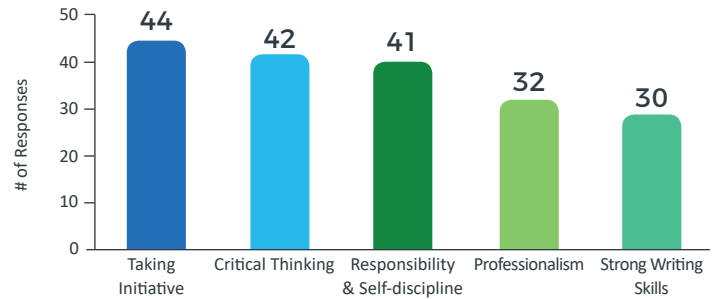
*"I find that the skills are present. My Concerns are with employee focus and commitment to a positive company culture. I also worry that the high cost of living in our area creates a general level of exhaustion and anxiety among the middle class workforce." ~Restaurant Manager*

# PUBLIC SECTOR & EDUCATION

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 85 Administrative, Technical & Support Staff
- 38 Counselors, social workers and related
- 35 Teachers/Faculty
- 29 Facilities/Maintenance
- 27 Other

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 98 Ability to Organize, Plan & Set Goals
- 75 Ability to Implement Plans & Policies
- 69 Effective Management & Leadership Skills
- 47 Strong Writing Skills
- 39 Effective, responsible public and social media communication

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?

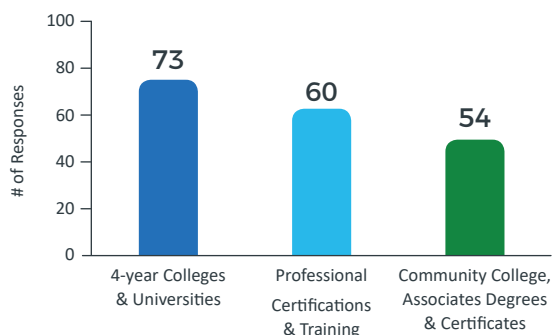


## Key Takeaway

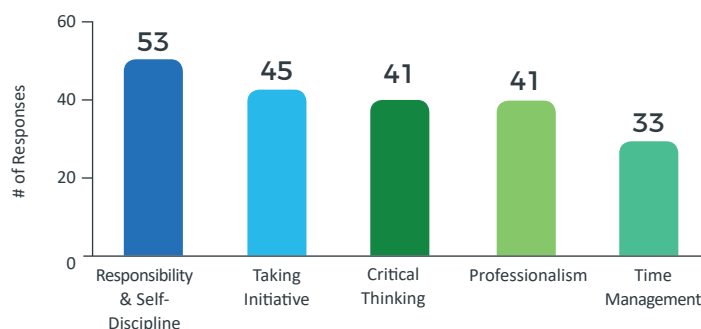
This industry ranked 4-degree programs as the most desirable credentials needed for future workforce. Additionally, this industry is most satisfied with quality of workforce of all sectors – rating local pipeline a 3.06 of 5.

# PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL SERVICES

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



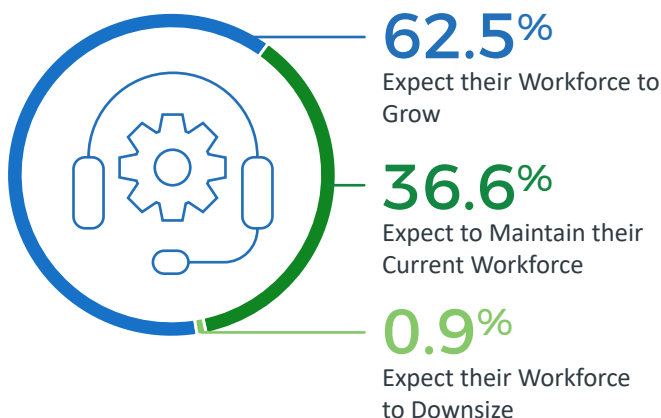
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 56** Administrative Assistants
- 39** Marketing Professionals
- 28** Other
- 26** Accountants and book keepers
- 19** Computer & IT Support Professionals

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 77** Ability to Work Efficiently
- 73** Effective Communication Appropriate to Intended Audience
- 73** Creating & Maintaining Positive Client Relations
- 58** Information Gathering & Analysis
- 40** Knowledge of Relevant Computer Software

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?

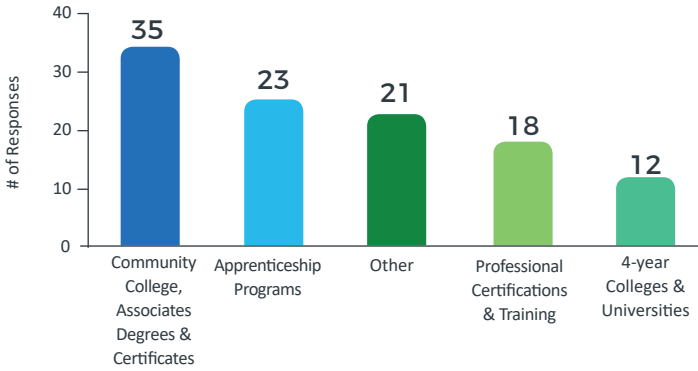


## Key Takeaway

All of respondents in this industry are small to mid-size businesses. Over 70% of respondents rely on friends and networks for sourcing talent while just 50% responded that they use online job portals.

# RETAIL

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



*Note: Information on job positions and skills needed not available.*

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?



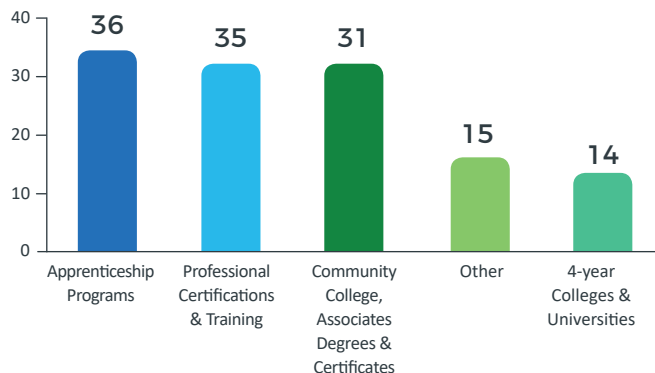
## Key Takeaway

This industry rated professionalism, responsibility and self-discipline, and taking initiative as the soft skills most difficult to find in the workforce.

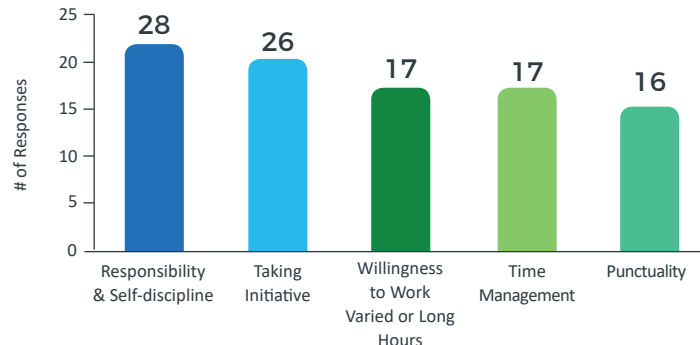


# CONSTRUCTION & SKILLED TRADES

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



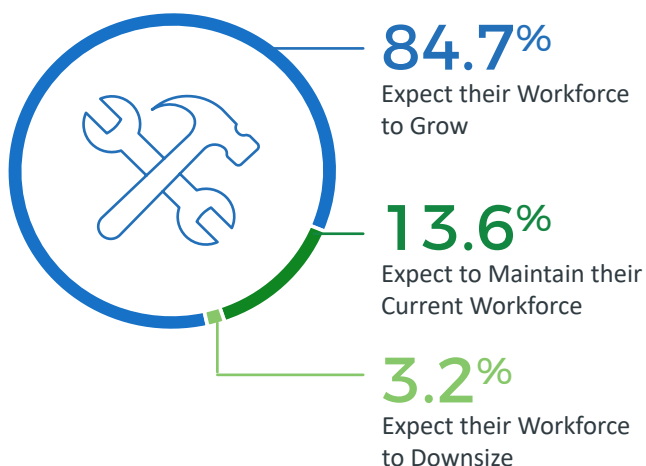
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 22** Commercial Construction Field Supervisors
- 17** Estimators
- 16** Finish Carpenters
- 15** Supervisors & Managers
- 13** Commercial Construction Projects Managers

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 43** Efficient Completion of Tasks
- 38** Communication & Visualization of Proposed Work
- 28** Participate & Contribute to a Safe Work Environment
- 26** Selection & Effective Use of Appropriate Tools, Machinery, Equipment, & Resources
- 20** Interpretation of drawings used in project planning

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?



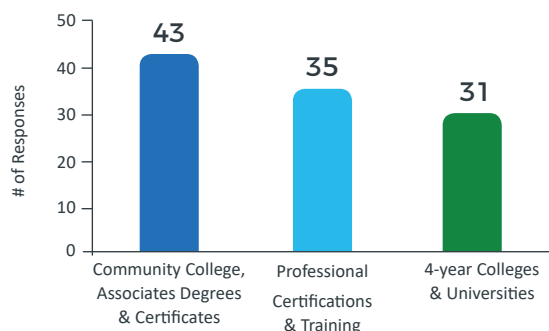
## Key Takeaway

This industry ranks apprenticeship programs, community college programs, and professional certifications as the most desirable credentials they are seeking in their future workforce.

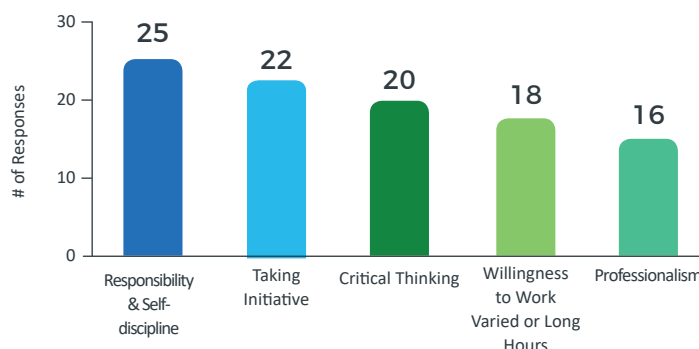
*"The largest hurdle in motivating young people to enter skilled trades is the deeply ingrained cultural belief that skilled trades area a substandard profession. It should a K-12 priority to elevate respect for skilled trades to the same level as an engineer, attorney or aircraft pilot." ~President, Construction Company*

# HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



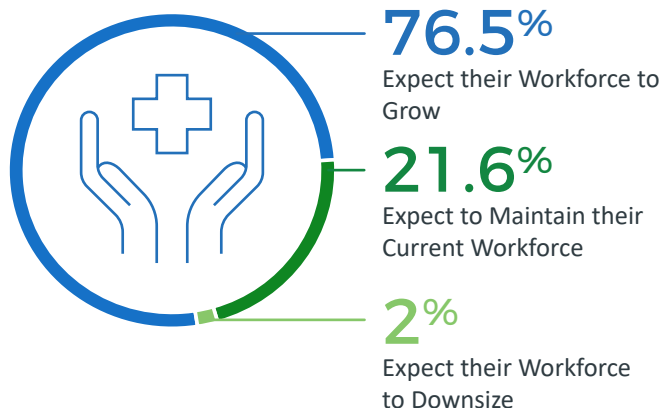
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 26** Health Aides & Assistants, Including Home & Health Aides
- 21** Nurses (RN & LPN)
- 17** Case & Care Managers
- 17** Other
- 10** Primary Care Physicians

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 39** Effective Communication & Appropriate Documentation
- 26** Efficient Response to Patient/Client Health Changes
- 21** Treatment Plan Creation Using a Problem-solving Model
- 21** Analysis of Information Gathered from Patient Evaluation
- 14** Confidential Patient/Client Information Collection in Compliance with Facility Guidelines

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?



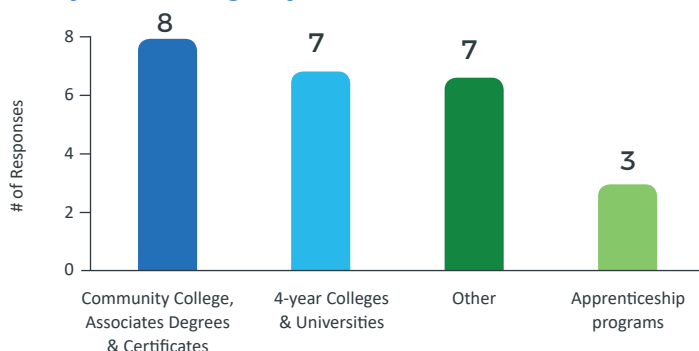
## Key Takeaway

This industry ranked on the job training and continuing education through community colleges highest for workforce training programs they plan to use.

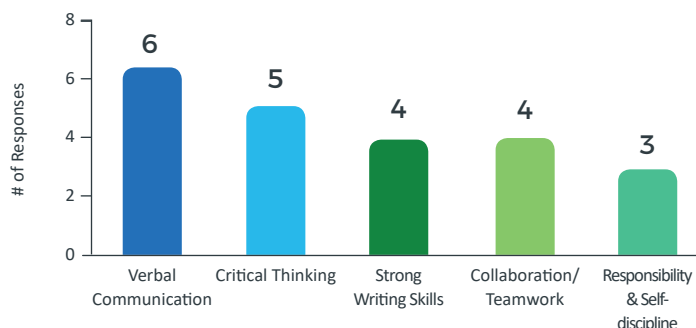
*"Biggest concern specific to health care is recruiting physicians, nursing professionals and qualified leadership of such." ~Director of HR, Health Care Provider*

# ENERGY, UTILITIES, & CLEANTECH

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



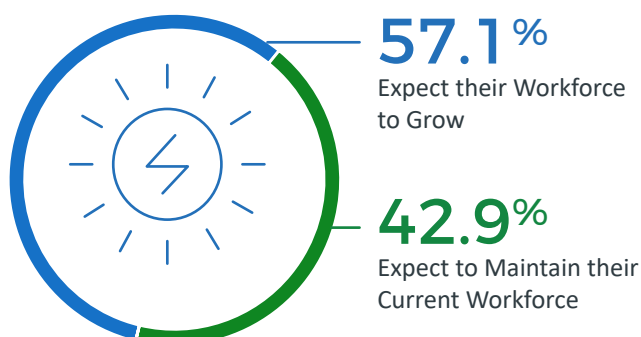
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 11 Field Technicians
- 7 Construction Workers
- 4 Maintenance Technicians
- 4 Electricians
- 3 Administrators

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 7 Effective Communication Appropriate to Intended Audience
- 6 Project Management Skills
- 6 Information Gathering & Analysis
- 6 Participates & Contributes to a Safe Work Environment
- 5 Other

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?

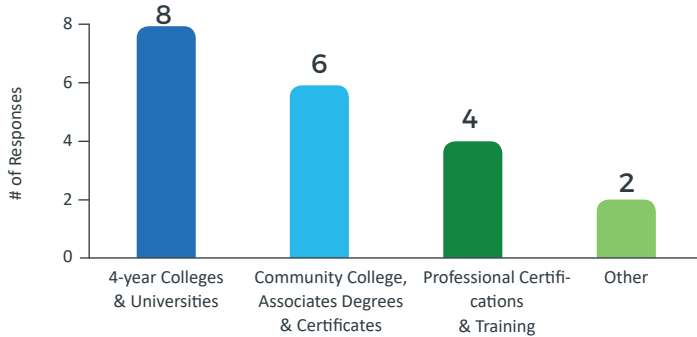


## Key Takeaway

This industry ranked quality of talent pipeline higher than average at 2.9 of 5 and placed equal weight on community college programs and 4-year degrees.

# IT, SOFTWARE, & ANALYTICS

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



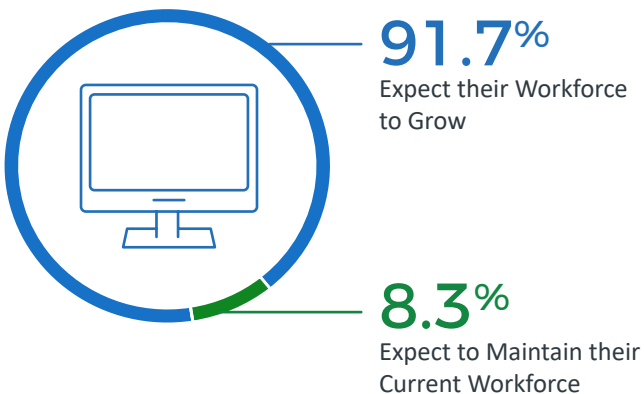
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 8 Software Developers, Programmers & Engineers
- 6 Business Development Professionals
- 6 Computer, networking and IT professionals
- 4 Marketing Professionals
- 4 Operations Managers

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 7 Effective Communication Appropriate to Intended Audience
- 6 Knowledge of Relevant Computer Software
- 5 Systems integration and automation
- 5 Remaining Current on Advancements in Technology
- 5 Product Development

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?

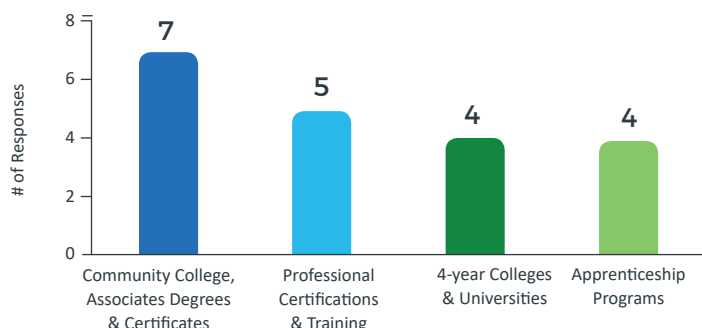


## Key Takeaway

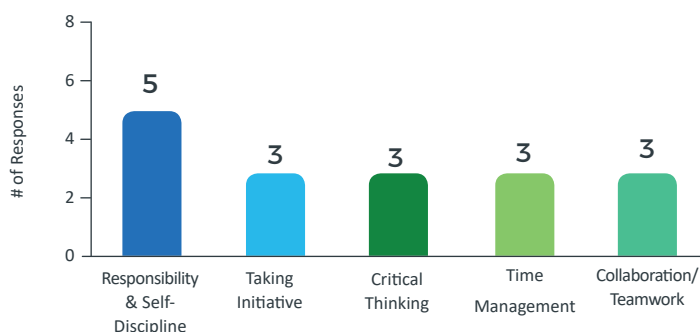
This industry ranked 4-year degree colleges and universities highest for credentials employers are seeking in their future workforce.

# LOGISTICS, TRANSPORTATION & WAREHOUSING

What credentials or education experience are you seeking in your future workforce?



What qualities or soft skills are most difficult to find in the workforce?



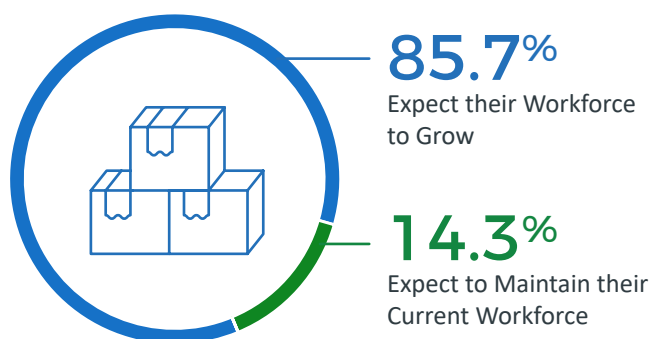
Which positions do you expect to have the most openings in the next 3 years?

- 4 Mechanics, machinists and repair personnel
- 3 Labors & Material Movers
- 3 Supervisors & Managers
- 3 Transportation & Drivers
- 2 Business & Engineering Professionals

What skills are the most important for hiring?

- 5 Communication of Relevant Information for Decision Making
- 4 Allocation of Resources to Minimize Gaps in Operation
- 2 Knowledge of Relevant Computer Software
- 2 Information Gathering and Analysis
- 2 Implementation & Evaluation of Risk Management Strategies

Do you expect your workforce to grow in the next 3 years?



## Key Takeaway

This sector had the lowest rating of the quality of talent pipeline. Respondents ranked quality at 2.29 of 5.



NO. 2

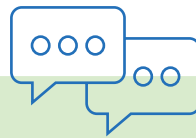
Fastest growing county in NC when it comes to new businesses, Buncombe County - *SmartAsset*

## SUMMARY

The key findings in this report describe the general consensus from the data. Based on the key findings, the following items were identified as the strongest takeaways from the State of the Workforce WNC Analysis:

- ✓ Businesses expect to grow
- ✓ WNC has a high concentration of small businesses with hiring challenges
- ✓ Employers rely on community college programs and are looking for candidates with associates' degrees and professional certificates
- ✓ The region's workforce has a mix of strengths and challenges that are consistent with national trends
- ✓ Skill gaps may exist due to supply and demand, interest, skills, education, and experience
- ✓ Family and friends' networks are most commonly used for sourcing talent

Overall, Western North Carolina is well-suited to proactively address talent needs due to high-quality education resources, access to training, and a community that is focused on growing a strong talent pipeline. The data contained on the previous pages are reflective of the survey completed in November 2018.



### Stay Connected & Keep the Conversation Going.

Visit our web page at

[ashevillechamber.org/wncalent](https://ashevillechamber.org/wncalent) for updates on workforce needs as we take steps to strengthen and grow talent in the region.

# PARTNERS

Asheville Home Builders Association	Lenoir Rhyne University
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College	McDowell Chamber of Commerce
Asheville Arts Council	Meet the Geeks
Asheville City Schools	Montreat College
Asheville Independent Restaurants (AIR)	Mountain BizWorks
Biltmore Farms	Mountain Housing Opportunities
Blue Ridge Community College	Mountain West Partnership
Blue Ridge Food Ventures	Navitat Canopy Adventures
Brevard Transylvania Chamber of Commerce	NC Works Career Center
Buncombe County Schools	North Carolina Biotechnology Center
Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce	Outdoor Gear Builders
Community Action Opportunities	SBTDC
City of Asheville	Smoky Mountains STEM Collaborative
Collider	Southwestern Community College
Duke Energy Foundation	Southwestern Workforce Development Board
Explore Asheville	Transylvania County Schools
Express Pros	UNC Asheville
Green Built Alliance	United Way of Asheville Buncombe County
Green Opportunities	Western Carolina University
Hatch	Western Region Education Service Alliance
Haywood County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Council	Polk County Economic Development
Haywood County Government	WNC Human Resources Association
Henderson County Chamber of Commerce	Women Entrepreneurs of Western North Carolina
Henderson County Economic Development Partnership	Yancey County Economic Development Commission
Jackson County Chamber of Commerce	Young Professionals of Asheville
Jackson County Office of Economic Development	







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